

Geospatial Software Experience - Does the Flavor Matter?

Q6 Please add any other thoughts you have on this topic below, thanks!

Answered: 36 Skipped: 59

#	Responses	Date
1	Obviously ability and willingness to learn new software impacts the above. Also, as I think of things, Managers will likely not need to know the technical ins & outs of every task, but just have a broad overview; Technicians will likely not be doing things that are too complex without direction / training / supervision. I do see the "Professional" or "Analyst" level as needing strong familiarity, though, as they are likely to be the resource of what's possible and how to best do it, as well as providing the training / support around the effort.	9/23/2016 9:09 AM
2	When hiring I normally look for people who can think critically about GIS and the challenges their task presents them. As long as they have a basic understanding of the software and how to use it, I am happy. Being able to think about how to apply GIS is far more important than being able to use it fully. I can teach them how to elevate their skill set.	9/22/2016 1:54 PM
3	I think it's important to have both skill sets of knowledge specific to software and geospatial analysis.	9/22/2016 1:00 PM
4	Ability to learn, adapt, problem solve, communicate (written word included) and be able to interact with coworkers and customers FAR more important than knowledge of a software package. We can teach our staff how to use and apply software to solve a problem far more successfully than any generic experience received in an educational setting. Remember, a couple of weeks at a full time professional job is equal to an entire semester.	9/22/2016 12:44 PM
5	Our state has mandated that state agencies use the ESRI suite of products for most desktop geospatial work. Despite this, we still must use open source tools to work with our partners in other organizations, and to test / confirm that the products / services we produce actually work for all users. We have projects that specifically focus on interoperability, and I wish that more value was placed on that sort of capability in candidates. Personally I hate when job applicants clearly only know how to follow button-click bunny trails to accomplish tasks. I want them to understand what is happening below the surface of the GUI, so they are able to detect when unexpected results happen, and be able to troubleshoot problems so that projects don't get stuck in a software cul-de-sac. Being able to test multiple approaches in order to determine the best path in a complex array of choices is a big skill I wish we could do a better job of building in students.	9/22/2016 12:29 PM
6	There is so much more to our work than which software package you know, but I would suggest first learning the industry standard as a new member of the work force, and pick up the skills in the lesser-know packages going forward.	9/22/2016 12:13 PM
7	Answers to questions 3-5 assume that the positions require experience with GIS.	9/22/2016 10:42 AM
8	Other general IT knowledge is becoming increasingly important as the complexity of interoperability of software increases.	9/22/2016 10:37 AM
9	ESRI has the largest market share of any single GIS company in the industry. While OS GIS has it's advantages, ArcGIS is more common than any other software... That said, knowing GIS fundamentals in any software still gives you the necessary information and it simply becomes a factor of finding the right tool for that software and learning how to navigate the GUI.	9/22/2016 10:35 AM
10	Experience with several types of software is best. practical technical knowledge plus scientific understanding makes the best candidates. Then after hiring, willingness to stay up-to-date with changes important to stay relevant.	9/22/2016 10:33 AM
11	We need to work closer as a community to refine the tools that we need for the users that need them in the time frame we have available.	9/22/2016 10:22 AM
12	We are stressed enough for time to do what we have to do. So if a position we are filling will be doing GIS work all day every day, and if what they are doing gets much beyond basic stuff, then the overhead of having to teach them a lot of "buttonology" (great term!) places a premium on having someone who knows the GIS software we are using. Also, greater experience with the GIS software we do use, means that you are more likely to be able to distinguish a software bug or system failure from your ignorance of the software.	9/22/2016 10:19 AM
13	Generally speaking, knowledge of the possible techniques, tools, and algorithms is more important than the particular program or language. That being said, we do the vast majority of our work using Python scripts, and require that for our Analysts/Technicians.	9/22/2016 10:18 AM
14	Experience with open-source tools represents next to no value for a candidate applying for a professional position at our organization. Specific software experience is critical. Universities that teach only or even primarily open-source tools are doing their students an incredible dis-service.	9/22/2016 10:16 AM

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15	We're an open-source shop, so we look for candidates who have at least explored other options than ArcGIS. We still use it regularly, but for most of our clients purposes, most cleaning and analysis can be performed with R/QGIS, and maps made in Carto/Leaflet	9/22/2016 10:15 AM
16	Individuals who use GIS (regardless of software) need to be detail oriented, show initiative, and work well with others in a variety of departments.	9/22/2016 10:00 AM
17	In addition to all the above, certification is also a plus when hiring to professional level	9/22/2016 9:58 AM
18	I would only hire a GIS person that had experience with ESRI GIS Software	9/22/2016 9:47 AM
19	To the list of non-open-source GIS software used in my agency, please add the following: ArcGIS Server, Google Maps API	9/22/2016 9:46 AM
20	You missed a question - When hiring for a GIS Specialist and Geospecial Data Collector/Developer is important that a candidate have A) sufficient experience with the specific software used in your organization or B) only demonstrate they have sufficient knowledge of the principals, processes, analyses, and data quality techniques to employ the geospatial applications with your organization? We prefer B. Technology is always changing and our MIS and GIS staff are called upon to respond to and make sense of new tools to serve our community.	9/22/2016 9:39 AM
21	I'm in a weird position in that my "staff" are grad assistants. Due to high turnover, I very much prefer they come in knowing ArcGIS since it's what I primarily use and all our files (.mxds) are here. For some reason I feel more comfortable having all map layout files in one software for consistency. However, as an educator, I tell my students to learn multiple software packages and it's really about the concepts.	9/22/2016 9:29 AM
22	ESRI is the industry leader, and as such requiring it as a GIS tool, is not different than requiring admin staff be proficient in the Microsoft Suite of office automation tools.	9/22/2016 9:23 AM
23	the emphasis on ESRI products has waned with the other products providing more innovation, but still feel that ESRI is synonymous with GIS in the Public Sector market.	9/22/2016 9:22 AM
24	Ability to learn is much more important than in-depth experience with particular software. Of course, this needs to be paired with an appropriate level of theoretical knowledge to help with decision making about which approaches are possible and which are advisable.	9/22/2016 9:18 AM
25	Open source is great, but when in a professional environment you need software that is going to be updated, patched, has support, and has the capabilities to do complex modeling, and expandable to support all facets of municipal government. Students or entry level technicians should be somewhat versed in ESRI products and they should be taught at the university level. Why teach a student software that will not be used in the industry, teach them something that will help them obtain a well paying job	9/22/2016 9:11 AM
26	I believe being able to generate a required deliverable would be more important. If they can duplicate using software they are most familiar with than I say go with that. I'll caveat that last statement with, so long as it does not cost any additional money. If the town uses ESRI products but the hired person would prefer to use open source then I see no problem. However, if the opposite were true and the town would have to shell additional money for a "preferred" program then I would lean towards a candidate who already knows the software on hand.	9/22/2016 9:09 AM
27	Having a basic understanding of geospatial ideas and concepts are important - one can always learn the software as they go along.	9/22/2016 9:08 AM
28	For us its more important that the people we are hiring understand the basic GIS concepts. Anyone can learn which buttons to press in the interface to make things happen, it is important to learn what that is doing to the data and what the gains and pitfalls might be from one method to another. Additionally, we sometimes see candidates who followed their professor's focus du jour into a very narrow field of geospatial activity. They become an extreme specialist while never learning the more broad aspects of GIS, they end up ill prepared for day to day work in any field but the very narrow one, which has few if any jobs outside academia.	9/22/2016 9:07 AM
29	Understanding the basics of data structures, cartography, and GIS based analysis is much more important. Actually, in the case of a technician level employee, I prefer to teach them our workflows rather than have them come to us with their own methodologies.	9/22/2016 9:06 AM
30	As a GIS student, I was hurt early on by not having hands on knowledge/experience with ESRI. I would have been considered earlier if I learned it in school. Later, as a hiring manager, I recruited from multiple schools and had to consider experience with ESRI and AutoCAD in the process. Businesses expect experience in certain software over others. The debate may exist in college over which is BEST, but at least one is EXPECTED in the outside world.	9/22/2016 9:03 AM
31	We aren't as concerned about what software potential employees know how to use as much as we are concerned with the candidate's ability to interpret the results of geospatial analyses as well as their understanding of geospatial concepts.	9/22/2016 8:59 AM

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32	As an organization, we exclusively use ArcGIS. However, due to license restrictions and availability, I have used QGIS to perform analyses on data the the organization's license did not permit. With that said, I am the only staff member using QGIS in any capacity.	9/22/2016 8:59 AM
33	I have never understood why colleges would try to teach students anything except ArcGIS... As the market leader (by far- in 2015 Esri held 43% of the GIS market compared to the second largest supplier who had 11%... And whose market share has actually increased from 2011 when they held *only* 40%). And specifically here in New England (or the Northeast) there aren't many major players in the GIS arena (except for higher education users) that use anything but Esri tools for anything but possibly a web portal.	9/22/2016 8:57 AM
34	Software changes all the time. It makes me crazy when I see not only proficiency in a certain software, but when the software version is specifically listed. It is far more important to me that the people have good skills in the concepts that will be used in their job - the software skills will follow.	9/22/2016 8:55 AM
35	There are some things you can teach and some things you cannot. Hiring for aptitude, enthusiasm and the willingness to learn will more often than not be the wise decision, regardless of experience in Software ABC.	9/22/2016 8:54 AM
36	In the private industry, ESRI dominates both for our clients, us and our competitors	9/22/2016 8:48 AM